

Remarks/Arguments:

With the present response, claims 1-17 are pending. Claims 13-17 have been withdrawn pursuant to a restriction requirement.

The Examiner is thanked for the courtesy of the telephone interview conducted with the undersigned on October 2, 2007. During the interview, a potential amendment to claim 1 to distinguish the claimed invention over the cited prior art was discussed.

Claim rejections

Claims 1, 5-7, 9, and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,168,621 to Vrba ("Vrba") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0114923 to Swanick et al. ("Swanick").

Independent claim 1 has been amended to recite, *inter alia*, a bifurcated stent being expandable from an unexpanded state to an expanded state. The stent comprises a trunk region having a self-expandable section and a balloon expandable section extending from a first end of the self-expandable section. *At least one self-expandable branch is fixedly connected to and extends from a second end of the self-expandable section of the trunk region.*

Regarding the Vrba reference, the Office Action alleges that branch 32 extends from the right end of portion 34 as seen in FIG. 7. Branch 34 is not fixedly connected to the right end of portion 34, as is evidenced by Vrba FIG. 8, which shows right end of branch 32 and right end of branch 34 separated from each other. Swanick is cited for teaching one of the branches to be larger in diameter.

Amended claim 1 recites that the at least one self-expandable branch is also *fixedly connected to the second end* of the self-expandable branch, which is neither disclosed nor suggested by the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick. Because the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick fails to disclose or suggest all of the limitations of claim 1, as amended, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of amended claim 1 is improper. Reconsideration and allowance of claim 1 are respectfully requested. Claims 5-7, 9, and 10 all ultimately depend from claim 1, and are therefore patentable over the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick for at least the same reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Reconsideration and allowance of claims 5-7, 9, and 10 are respectfully requested.

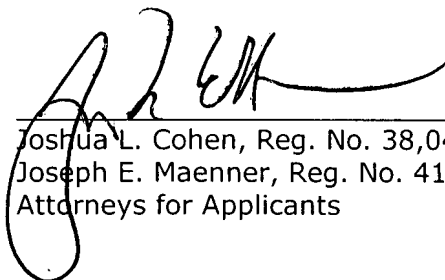
Claims 2-4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Vrba in view of Swanick and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,383,892 to Cardon et al. ("Cardon"). Claims 2-4 depend from claim 1 and incorporate all of the elements recited in claim 1. Cardon is cited for allegedly disclosing a balloon expandable section including a plurality of interconnecting members. The proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick fails to disclose all of the elements recited in claim 1, as noted above. Moreover, Cardon fails to cure the deficiencies of the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick. More specifically, Cardon fails to suggest any modification of the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick which would make up the deficiencies set forth above with respect to the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 2-4 are patentable over the proposed combination of Vrba, Swanick, and Cardon. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 2-4.

Claims 8, 11, and 12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Vrba in view of Swanick and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,325,819 to Pavcnik et al. ("Pavcnik"). Claims 8, 11, and 12 depend from claim 1 and incorporate all of the elements recited in claim 1. Pavcnik is cited for allegedly disclosing a balloon expandable stent constructed from stainless steel, vessel engagement members (barbs), and a graft cover. The proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick fails to disclose all of the elements recited in claim 1, as noted above. Moreover, Pavcnik fails to cure the deficiencies of the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick. More specifically, Pavcnik fails to suggest any modification of the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick which would make up the deficiencies set forth above with respect to the proposed combination of Vrba and Swanick. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 8, 11, and 12 are patentable over the proposed combination of Vrba, Swanick, and Cardon. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of claims 8, 11, and 12.

Conclusion

In light of the above amendments and arguments, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-12 are in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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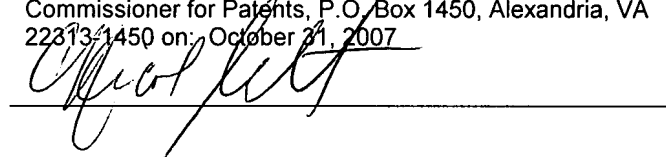
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